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"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## SEBASTIAN STROME.

BY JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

CHAPTER XX. THE BABY.

THIS painful division of mind between the baby's welfare and Mary's was not a thing that Sebastian could have foreseen; and it gave him food for reflection. Why should he particularly care what happened to Mary Dene? Of course he esteemed, respected, and admired her; but we esteem, respect, and admire many persons whose death or disaster affects us with nothing worse than a semi-agreeable titillation of curiosity or surprise. Now, to Sebastian, the idea of Mary marrying Fawley was all but intolerable; so nearly intolerable that he could not contemplate it without rage and abhorrence. Was this jealousy? No; for Sebastian immediately thought of several men whom he could have seen Mary marry with complete equanimity: besides, had he not dissolved the engagement between himself and her on the explicit ground that he did not care enough for her to make her his wife? It must, therefore, be Fawley's personal vileness, and unfitness for the honourable estate of marriage, that influenced him. But, again, Sebastian knew that Fawley might have married any other woman than this particular Mary Dene, and Sebastian would not have thought of interfering. Apparently, then, his feeling for her must be something more than ordinary respect, admiration, or esteem. What could this ambiguous feeling be?

Whatever it was, it had not been sufficiently powerful to induce him to leave the baby in the crisis of its disorder in order to prevent the marriage: it had been only

powerful enough to make his refraining from doing so very painful. But did not this indicate an unexpectedly strong feeling for the baby? The baby was a baby, and he was its father; but it would seem, at first sight, as if his parental affection ought logically to be less rather than above the average. For the baby was, though innocently, the immediate cause of his social ruin. He could not love it for its mother's sake, for he had never loved its mother: she had but ministered to his selfish pleasure for a while: still less could he love it for his own sake, since it was the visible reminder of the most disastrous folly of his life; and finally, as to loving it for what it was in itself, that was the least logical alternative of all—for it was scarcely more than the germ of a human being, without character and without principles, and, what was more, without any noticeable personal attractions. How to explain why, for the sake of preserving this human germ from possible death, he had been willing to abandon Mary Dene to the certainty of a fate in comparison with which death was a minor evil? Well, it was a mystery: one of those non-sequiturs to which men who regard life from such a philosophical standpoint as Sebastian Strome's are peculiarly exposed; and one of the penalties of indulgence in materialistic credulity.

His mystification may have been one reason why he speedily came to regard the baby as a wonder of the world—a being of miraculous attributes. Never having devoted any study to babies heretofore, he had no comparative data to go upon; it seemed to him that there was something supernatural about the little thing. The absence of speculation in its round grey eyes, the

arbitrary and aimless gesticulations of its small hands and feet, its general lack of adjustment to earthly conditions—all seemed to mark it as a creature not originally intended to be human. The impossibility of foretelling what its line of action would be in any circumstances except those of hunger and of physical pain, rendered its every manifestation profoundly interesting to him. When he had first looked forward to taking the entire charge of this baby, he had been chiefly impressed with the conviction that it would be an immense inconvenience; but inasmuch as he had embarked in the enterprise from a bare sentiment of obligation, this idea had rather stimulated him than otherwise. The unprecedented discovery that a baby could be something more or less than a nuisance, was somewhat bewildering; it necessitated an entirely fresh focussing of his mental retina. Sebastian found none of the difficulty in the practical details of baby-management that embarrasses most men-nurses: he had always been singularly deft and capable with his hands; and his ways of moving were habitually quiet and gentle. His patience, in any undertaking that interested him, was practically inexhaustible; and a valuable sense of humour smoothed many passages that might otherwise have been trying. The baby, without directly expressing its appreciation of his way of doing things, contrived to do so indirectly by dint of passionate expostulations against whomsoever attempted to act as his substitute. Sebastian was so acutely flattered by this evidence of partiality, that he could hardly keep himself from giving way to indecorous manifestations of triumph in the presence of those who were thus discomfited. He soon persuaded himself that the greatest favour he could confer upon a given person was to let that person hold the baby, or in any way contribute to its amusement. The woman who lived on the same floor, and to whom allusion has already been made, came in for the greater part of these favours up to the time of the baby's illness. She had once been an impulsive and soft-hearted Irish girl; she now resembled the baby in being devoid of character and principles; but she drank brandy instead of milk, and her complexion more resembled the outside of a conch-shell than the inside. A certain fitful and reckless tenderness nevertheless remained; she had once had a baby of her own; and sometimes, with-

out warning or introduction, she would burst out into an ungainly splutter of grief, accompanied with much rubbing of the eyes and nose, and indefinite bad language—generally ending by wagging her head ominously at vacancy, and saying in a menacing tone: "Well, never mind! it's meself knows what it is!" After a time she and Sebastian became very good friends, and he placed great confidence in her; even going so far as to leave the baby in her charge on the occasion already mentioned. Nor did the ill-success of this experiment alienate his regard, it being evident enough that the baby's illness was occasioned not by neglect, but by a mistaken zeal in the application of remedies against squalling. Of course he never allowed her to "look after" the baby again, but the rapture of their friendly relations did not come until some time afterwards, and it was caused by his having interfered one night to prevent "her fellow" from kicking her to death. Kathleen never forgave this officiousness on Sebastian's part; and before he had time to appease her wrath she was ejected for failing to pay her rent, and was swallowed up somewhere in the muddy abyss without. Sebastian never saw her again.

Meanwhile the baby's illness cost Sebastian dear, in more senses than one. He had a doctor to see it, and every fresh prescription was a week's rent. His anxiety, not to speak of the necessity for constant watchfulness, left him little time for his carving, and he got behindhand with his orders. The ten pounds began to melt away. There was really nothing cheerful in the situation. It was sad to listen to the baby's moaning cries when it was awake; it was sad to watch its feverish cheeks and restless turnings when it was asleep; it was maddening to hear the coarse shouts and noises of indifferent people in the house or in the street—noises which might deprive the baby of essential rest. Miserable, too, was the reflection that the money was going, and that no adequate provision was being made to supply the loss. Then Sebastian, pacing up and down the sixteen feet of narrow space, would ask himself whether he ought not to let the baby go—let it enjoy whatever benefits of air and quiet and attention its five hundred pounds could procure it: whether to keep it in that stifling room were not a kind of murder? And he would answer himself, with quick and heavy sighs: "Yes, yes, I must let it go, or else

it will die: I must let it go, and die myself: if I love it, I must let it go!" Then he would go and look at it as it lay there in its crib; and sometimes it would seem almost to return his look, and its little hand would tightly clasp his finger, and it would send forth a plaintive, inarticulate murmur. Then Sebastian would clench his teeth together and say: "I cannot let it go! I have a right to keep it. No one else knows how to love it. Little darling, I love you—stay with me!" And he would go off and work at his carving with a sort of frenzy. But still the ten pounds kept melting away, and he could not supply the loss.

When this had gone on for several weeks, the baby sometimes rallying a little, and then again falling away, Sebastian's aspect began to undergo a marked change. His cheeks became very hollow, and had an unhealthy pallor, rendered more conspicuous by contrast with the thick beard and the black mole under the left eye. The obliquity in his vision seemed to become greater; the hair on the top of his head thinned away more and more, until he was nearly bald. He had contracted a habit of muttering in an undertone to himself, giving his lips an odd, sinister movement. He looked like a man of forty, worn down by poverty and an evil conscience. In some of his moods his face was unpleasant to see; people began to avoid him; an Italian woman living in the same street affirmed that he had the evil eye. Nobody had comprehended him from the outset; he had rejected several eligible offers of a place in the criminal professions. What did he want here? Made things out of wood, did he? Artistic carving was a branch of industry not appreciated in Spitalfields. Match-box making, or skinning cats alive, was a reasonable, albeit poor-spirited alternative of burglary or pocket-picking; artistic carving was not. Perhaps this queer cove was a moucher come to spy out honest men's business? Perhaps he had better be requested to leave—the request to be supported by such arguments as his obstinacy might require? One night a raw-boned, gin-inflamed casuist crept up the stairs with an argument in his pocket in the shape of a three-pound slung-shot. He listened at the door of the queer cove's room: there was no sound. He opened the door cautiously, and carefully turned on his dark lantern. A ghastly figure stood motionless and voiceless in the centre of the room, with a baby in its arms. A

bloodless face was turned on the intruder; a red gleam seemed to issue from the strange hollow eyes. Here, evidently, was no living man, capable of understanding even slung-shot arguments, but a spectre; and a spectral baby into the bargain! The enterprising casuist, his eyeballs fixed and his knees relaxed with terror, began to back away from this apparition: suddenly it vanished—that is to say, the door of the dark lantern closed unawares, leaving Sebastian in his original obscurity. The casuist, in dread lest some flank movement should be attempted, made one more step backwards, and fell from the top of the stairs to the bottom, where he remained undisturbed until the following morning. He was then picked up with a broken arm and a cracked skull, and an ineradicable conviction that a ghost had flung him downstairs. No one attempted to argue with the queer cove after this.

Sebastian, who had been engaged in no less material an action than that of lulling the baby to sleep, and who, having omitted to complete the furnishing of his establishment by the addition of a looking-glass, had no idea what an uncanny object he was, imagined that the intruder's discomfiture had been effected by the baby, and from that time forth looked upon this little mortal as a sort of supernatural buckler against harm. From loving it with a feverish energy, as the one thing with which he could hold communion, and in contemplating which he was in a measure raised above the sordid barrenness of his present life, he gradually came to adopt towards it an attitude of mind which might almost be described as one of worship: the baby became his religion. Such a religion, though it may have its moments of passionate sweetness, must of necessity debar its votary from all possibility of repose and peace; for, the thing worshipped being mortal, is subject to mortal accidents; and there is always the lurking dread lest the accident of death should remove it altogether. Meanwhile, however, it is certain that the baby was the animating principle of Sebastian's life; all his thoughts and actions owned that as their centre and end; and if he could only have loved it enough to be willing to give it up, it might have been the means of leading him to a worship with which peace was less incompatible.

Sometimes, when his despair was very great, his pride would falter, and he would curse the folly that had be-



trayed him into a state of life which he lacked fortitude to sustain. And he would say to himself: "I will be a fool no longer: what are vows and resolutions in comparison with my love for my baby? I will take the money and begin a new life with it: by writing for the reviews, or in a dozen other ways, I can make an income on which I could live in luxury, and bring up the baby like the lady she was meant to be. Why hasn't she as good a right to be a lady as a pauper? Isn't there as much in her of me as of her mother? If I am entangled with baseness, my duty is to raise myself and this innocent child above it, not to lower myself deliberately to a base level. When I first came here, I had made no reckoning with the baby, and I fancied I could give these human devils an example of an ideal moral life, and induce them to imitate it; and so do some of the good my father expected of me. Little enough progress have I made so far; I am more likely to follow their example than they mine! Let me admit myself beaten, and give it up; my vows were made only to myself, and if I absolve myself, who can complain? I'll leave this to-morrow, and leave all insane theories along with it!"

Nevertheless, when the morrow came, Sebastian remained. Perhaps the baby was a little better, or was likely soon to become so; perhaps he had finished a piece of carving, and hoped to get a good price for it. Yes; but the truth was (whether Sebastian recognised it or not) that the moral energy to achieve his emancipation was no longer in him. The iron had not only entered his soul, but it had bound his limbs. He could still see the wiser course, and reason about it, and tell himself that to-morrow he would adopt it; but he never would adopt it. He was deteriorating both as to his physical and his spiritual nature; his blood was congealing, his will losing its integrity, his brain becoming inert. Very soon he would be no more capable of taking his former brilliant part in the world than was any one of the cowed and sullen beings whose ruined faces passed his own day after day. The neighbourhood of overt sin and misery was breathing into him its foul distemper. Sebastian Strome was, after all, on the way to obtain some notion of what life in pandemonium might be like.

At last the morning came when the ten pounds had melted away to a few shillings, and the greater part of those would be due

for rent the next day. The baby had been wakeful during the night, and Sebastian had carried it for many hours in his arms, once in a while falling half asleep over it, though never soundly enough to forget what he was about. In the morning he gave it some milk out of its feeding-bottle, reflecting the while that twenty-four hours hence he might find it difficult to procure a fresh supply. The baby soon passed into slumber, with its head turned on one side, and its little hands folded beneath its chin. As it lay so, it had a great resemblance to its mother—her long curving eyelashes, and the unsophisticated pout of the upper lip. It seemed to sleep more peacefully than usually; the feverish colour had left its cheeks, and there was a delicate moisture on its small forehead, and along the sides of its tiny nose. "Perhaps it is going to get well after all!" thought Sebastian with a momentary lightening of his dull heart. "Think of baby well and strong! Ah me! I wish there was Something I could thank for it!"

But the next moment his heart sank again. "What is it to me whether she gets well or not? To-morrow, or next day at farthest, I must either give her up or keep her to die of starvation. Only one more day together? Oh, baby!"

He got down on his knees by the side of the crib, and remained there for a long time in a sort of stupor: no tears, and no prayers; nothing but pain. He had himself eaten only bread-and-butter for several days past, and since yesterday morning he had omitted even that, so that his bodily weakness was great. Doubtless this affected his brain to some extent. At all events, the idea came to him suddenly, and like the revelation of a thing long sought, that he would kill the baby and himself, and so solve the whole problem in the simplest and most direct way. He arose immediately and went to his tool-box; but before he had opened it he had decided that nothing in it would do, and his mind had become fixed upon a certain bright sharp knife, with a black handle studded with brass nails, which he had often seen in the hands of a cobbler who lived a little way down the street. That knife he would borrow; no other would do. He filled the baby's bottle again, and put it where her lips would easily find it if she waked while he was away; then he pulled a cap down over his eyes, and went out.

He walked along briskly at first, his spirits seeming light by contrast with his



former mood; whether the lightness were that of delirium, he was not concerned to enquire. He was aware of an excessive weakness of the limbs; but was little troubled thereby, for it seemed to him that he could do without his body, and that if it were to fail, something that was himself would go on just the same—or perhaps with even more activity. It was absurd to suppose that a man like Sebastian Strome could be held in check by a trumpery tale of flesh and bones! It was true that in order to kill himself, the flesh and bones would have to be within reach. Yes; but if he dropped them on the way to the cobbler's, he could pick them up again on his way back. Stay, where was the cobbler's? He must have passed it: this street, too, had an unfamiliar look: could it be—yes, actually! Sebastian had lost his way: lost it in spite of the weight of flesh and bones which he still continued to drag about after him. Could anything be more ludicrous? Lightly laughing at himself, he turned about and began to retrace his steps. But a number of streets presented themselves, and not a familiar one among them. Verily, if this search were to go on much longer, the wisest course would be to leave the flesh and bones in some quiet nook or other, and proceed without them. Some nice quiet nook, where they could remain unmeddled with until the time came to use them again.

While Sebastian was looking for such a receptacle for the superfluous part of himself, he heard a shouting and a tumult, and a man running at full speed dashed round the corner, came into violent collision with him, and dashed on. A few moments afterwards a number of people followed, also running; among them a policeman. To these, however, Sebastian paid no heed, being, in fact, temporarily absent. The collision had sent his flesh and bones staggering into an open doorway; he had judged it advisable to leave them there, and had departed on a quest whither the most able-bodied policeman would have been puzzled to follow him.

The doorway appertained to a dwelling occupied by a prosperous pair of cadgers; a man and a woman. Some hours after the collision and its consequences they came home, and stumbled across the flesh and bones. The woman was munching a crust of bread, the man gnawing a sausage. They had just had a go of gin at the neighbouring public-house, and their hearts were merry.

"What is that?" enquired the male cadger, good-naturedly turning it over with his foot. "What does all the drunken blokes come to sleep it off in our hentry for?"

"That? Why, I knows 'im!" exclaimed the female cadger, stooping over the object. "It's that queer cove as lives at t'other end of the street. Look at the mole on 'im!"

"What, him as has a baby? Well, right you are! He can't be drunk then, cos he never drinks nothin'. Looks like he was dead."

"No such luck!" responded the female humorously, putting her hand over his heart. "He's just gone faint, that's wot it is, with gettin' nothin' to heat. And no wonder—sich pay as that 'ere carvin' brings him in! Why don't he take to cadgerin', and make a hincome like us do? 'Old on to 'im a bit, whilst I step round to the pub and fetches a nip o' brandy. We'll soon have him right agin!"

It was already evening when Sebastian dragged himself up his narrow stairs, his heart quaking. At every few steps he paused, listening for the baby's cry. It was not crying. Why? It was asleep still, perhaps. Nonsense! would it sleep for ten hours? Then why did it not cry? Had someone taken it away? Was it—

He stopped for two long minutes outside the door, unable to summon up resolution enough to open it. He carried in his hand, not the knife he had gone out for, and which he had forgotten, but a little can of fresh milk. At last he managed to open the door, and went fearfully in.

The broad-shouldered figure of a man was sitting with his back towards him, apparently holding something in his arms, which he was gently rocking backwards and forwards. This figure rose and faced Sebastian as he entered. It was the baby that he held in his arms, and it was sleeping quietly.

"Beg parding, mate," said the man in a husky whisper, smiling and nodding. "I come in here this mornin', an' found the little 'un a-yellin' and a-carryin' on, all by itself, and the milk-bottle empty. Well, I gets the bottle full agin, and thinks I, I'll jist bide here till the old woman comes 'ome—supposin' there was an old woman, yer see; but maybe you're she?"

Sebastian knew the voice, and he knew the face. His own was turned from the light, and his cap was over his eyes. He held out his arms for the baby, and the stranger put her gently into them, with-

out awakening her. Sebastian kissed her, and then sat down heavily on his chair. The stranger looked on, nodding and smiling. At length Sebastian said: "How came you here?"

"Well," responded the other sociably, "seein' as you seems to be an honest sort of a chap, and I've made free with your belongings, as it were, I don't mind tellin' yer. The way of it is, I was cuttin' away from a bobby, wot was after me for a pocket-book I'd priggid, and comin' round the top of this street I cannoned into a chap as was goin' t'other way, and he dropped. Well, I kep' right on, until gettin' to the door o' this 'ouse, and feelin' a bit blowed, I cuts upstairs; and baby she yells, and I goes in and finds her as I told yer. And bein' fond o' babbies, and not overmuch carin' to be seen in the street just then, I stayed; and so here I be!"

"Do you know who I am?" demanded Sebastian after a pause. He removed his cap, and added: "Don't you know me, Prout?"

Prout stared at him for a long time.

"You ain't Mr. Sebastian Strome?" he said at last, with an intonation half-embarrassed, half-incredulous. "No; he ain't much more'n half the age of you!"

"Well, that is my name."

Prout scratched his head, and looked down.

"A rum go this—ain't it!" he said. "And might that be Fanny's little kid?"

"Hers and mine."

"I say, what's come to you, Mr. Strome? I never looked to see you this way!"

"If you'd been a day or two later, you wouldn't have found me here. I'm at the end of my tether. I was starving, I believe, when you ran into me at the corner. I'm very much obliged to you, Prout, for taking care of the baby."

"And to think of she bein' Fanny's—and yours, of course! Starvin', did you say, Mr. Strome?"

"No matter about that. I was very anxious about the baby, and I thank you for taking care of her. If I'd a thousand pounds to give, you'd be welcome to it."

"I shouldn't take it, sir. You're welcome yourself. Well, I suppose, now, my room 'll be better nor my company," he added, moving towards the door. The baby stirred, and sent forth a vague sound, preparatory to waking up. Prout stopped. "Did you say starvin', meanin' as you hadn't enough to eat, nor money to buy it with?" he demanded, holding his cap in

one hand and slowly rubbing it with the other. "Coz, I got money enough, yer see, if that's all. That 'ere purse I priggid to-day 'as got seven pun' ten in it, 'sides silver. Let alone others. Look 'ere, Mr. Strome, what do you say? You let me stay here along with you, and we'll go halves—share and share alike, as pals should. What do you say? I'm flush now—maybe you will be next week; and we'll take care o' the little kid between us. Come now!"

Prout could have no idea how strong a temptation to Strome this proposal was. To accept it would mean not only to choose life instead of death, but to choose life with the baby instead of death without it. On the other hand, it was a proposal from one who frankly confessed himself a thief to go shares in his plunder. But, again, that would not last long: as soon as Sebastian had had a little time to recover himself, he would be able to earn some more money by his carving; or, if the worst came to the worst, he could make a draft on the five hundred pounds. It was a very strong temptation—to-day! Had such a thing been mentioned as possible six months ago, Sebastian would have laughed it to scorn. But those six months had worked a difference—all the difference between pride and abasement, independence and dependence, honour and dishonour. While he hesitated, the baby opened its eyes and yawned at him.

"Come now!" repeated Prout persuasively, coming forward a step. "Come now!" The baby stretched out its small arm, caught its fingers in its father's beard, and smiled. "Well, look at that now!" murmured Prout with a grunt of admiration, peeping over Sebastian's shoulder. "On'y seven months old, and takin' all that notice! Well—look—look at that agin! Oh my word, she is a beauty!"

"Yes, she's very clever; when she gets a little more flesh on her, she'll be three times as pretty. She's had a sort of fever for the last two months."

"Poor little soul! Never you fear, sir, we'll fetch her round, between us, till she's the stoutest young 'un between this and 'Ammersmith!"

Sebastian made no reply. Prout squatted down on the floor, and for nearly half an hour the baby entertained both of them with the most self-possessed and fascinating geniality.

"Seems like she know'd me already!" said Prout with a delighted chuckle.

"You mustn't make her too fond of you!" returned Sebastian with a short nervous laugh. "By-the-way, I shall be able to pay you back, you know—it's only just for the moment—"

"Make your mind easy, sir! Why, an hour with this 'ere little kid is worth all the money I could prig in a year! And that puts me in mind—I've been goin' on a bit wild since I see you last; but I shall give over now, and live honest. So yer can make yer mind easy. I'd live honest for the sake o' this little kid o' Fanny's—and yours—if I was forced to work my 'ands off!"

Sebastian laughed again. "Maybe I'm not so particular as you," he remarked; and this was all that passed between them on the subject.

The baby's health improved from this day: she treated Prout with a gracious condescension that made him her absolute slave: he approved himself the most cheerful and diligent of godfathers. He had given up "priggin'," and taken to a more conventional, if less exciting and profitable employment. Sebastian resumed his carving; but his industry was not what it had been; he was fitful and sombre. At the end of two months the balance of the household accounts was still somewhat against him.

One September day Prout proposed that they should take the baby for an outing to Hampstead Heath. It was superb weather; they travelled part of the way on the top of an omnibus, and walked the rest, carrying the baby by turns. They had their luncheon on the grass beneath the trees. Late in the afternoon they set off on their return home. A short distance from the Heath they met a carriage, with coachman and footman in livery, and a lady seated within. Sebastian was carrying the baby. The lady was thin and pale, but of a grand type of beauty; her hair auburn, her eyes dark hazel. She fixed these large eyes steadfastly upon Sebastian, as he and Prout stood aside to let the carriage pass. Immediately afterwards she spoke to the coachman, who reined in his horses; and the lady leaned out, and beckoned Sebastian to come to her.

#### RURAL QUIET IN JAPAN.

"NERVOUS, eh! and can't sleep? Humph! Take a trip into the country for a few days, and you'll be all right! Go to any nice

quiet place, where you can get good fresh air, and have a thorough rest. Hot bathing, if you like, but don't overdo it."

Thus to me my doctor, and I take his advice. I don't know that I have anything particular the matter with me. As for nervousness, that is constitutional; my slumbers are always as sensitive to disturbing influences as an earthquake indicator, and sleeplessness is my frequent fate. However, a holiday's a holiday, and off I go in search of sleep and quiet.

What a charming little tea-house; clean, wholesome looking, rest inviting! The journey has been somewhat long and tedious. To say nothing of the utter loss of dignity that is involved in being dragged and propelled in an adult perambulator\* by two lightly clothed and heavily perspiring fellow creatures, there cometh thereby a soreness to the shoulders and a weariness to the back, that renders the soft yielding mats especially inviting to the jaded frame. A kind welcome too from the plump damsels with the blackest of eyes and whitest of teeth, and—truth must be told—grubbiest of hands. "The gentleman is indeed welcome. He will deign to rest, for indeed, indeed, he must be tired! Such a long journey, and left Yokohama this morning! So indeed it will be. Be pleased to take one cup of tea. Truly indeed it is late. This is a small room, but there are several guests, and if the gentleman does not mind for one night, to-morrow he can have the best apartment. Bring the mattresses? Certainly, at once. The gentleman is sleepy. To be sure! Good night! May the gentleman sleep very well."

Now can anything be more hopeful than such a reception? At once I feel that this is indeed a haven of rest, and vow, as I throw myself in extended ecstasy on the bed, that I have at last found "that lodge" in the world's "vast wilderness" for which the over-fagged soul so constantly cries out, and that I have not one, but three or four fair Japanese spirits for my ministers whenever I choose to clap my hands, like an Arabian Nights' hero, and summon them. Nay, they come without; for just as I am arriving at that state of mixed consciousness which precedes healthy slumber, one of my sliding panels opens with a gentle gliding in its wooden grooves, and some

\* The usual mode of locomotion on any but mountain roads was by means of a two-wheeled vehicle called a "jin-ri-ki-sha," drawn by one or two men. It much resembles a perambulator with shafts.



one asks me if I want anything more. To my reply in the negative a respectfully pitched voice states that a little more oil will be required to be brought for the lamp. In about five minutes enter two—I suppose for propriety's sake—maiden slaves of the lamp. Oil is poured in, and then a respectful duet again wishes "that the gentleman may sleep well."

I earnestly hope that I shall, and am just beginning to have glimpses into the fairy land of dreams, when again the gentle gliding of the opening panel. "She had forgotten to ask at what time the gentleman would like to be called. Oh, it did not matter? He was not going to leave early? Very good, then she would let him sleep. Again, may he sleep well."

I turn on my side and make preparations for going to sleep in good earnest. No more dallying with tired nature's sweet restorer. I feel that I have the whole night before me for undisturbed repose, without the haunting cares of to-morrow's work, and I am going to make the most of it. I begin to see nothing but jinrikishas, then rows of houses, then quite a procession of people passing, one of whom stops before me and startles me by calling out in a voice of unearthly shrillness, "Gomen nasai!"\* Then comes that inexplicable return from the land of dreams to a waking existence, when the mind is something like a slightly incomplete dissolving view, the faint outlines of the dream picture being not quite obliterated by the more powerful tones of reality. Again, "Gomen nasai!" Then I come to myself completely, and ask rather sharply, "What is it?"

"Please excuse him, but it is the shampooer; will I have a few rubs?"

I answer angrily, "No!"

"Truly and indeed he has been very unpolite. He had thought it might be that the gentleman was tired, and would like to have his honourable body rubbed a little. No! did the gentleman say?" The gentleman had said, "No!" and had further strengthened the negative by a short but potent phrase. "He had most humbly understood; good night, and may the gentleman sleep well."

Surely now I shall be permitted to rest in uninterrupted peace. With an anathema on all shampooers in general, and on my late intruder in particular, I give my pillow, which consists of a native quilt,

rolled up into a bundle, a savage thump, which has the effect of causing its immediate unrolling. This necessitates my sitting up and remodelling it, which results in complete derangement of my bedding inferior and superior, so that by the time I have re-made my bed, and with many a twist and kick and peevish grunt have succeeded in getting once more into a comfortable position, I find myself wider awake than when I first lay down. Sleep is a coy spirit! She will come all unasked under the most unlikely conditions, but neglect her advances for a moment, or unwittingly offend her in the slightest degree, and you find that, in a huff, she has taken away all her poppies, and left in their place only nettles and thorns.

Nettles and thorns? Aye, and something worse. Fleas, by all that is odious! There's a legion advancing up my right leg, and throwing out skirmishers on my left. An active engagement has commenced between my shoulder-blades. Like the grass in the well-remembered poem of my childhood, they "come creeping, creeping everywhere." Were I a Briareus, my hundred hands could find more than full employment. But this can be endured no longer. Fortunately, warned by previous suffering, I have brought with me some insect powder. Hastily getting up, I plentifully bestrew therewith my couch and the circumadjacent matting. Then I re-lay the bed, re-fold my refractory pillow, and heaving a long and savagely patient sigh, once more court the longed-for slumber. No more fleas; aha! the enemy is vanquished! I feel like the destroying angel that came down on the Assyrians, and I chuckle to think that when they want to skip in the morning they will find themselves all dead corpses.

What can make my nose itch to such a frightful extent? Oh—um-m-m! Rub, rub, rub. I shall probably effectually spoil the shape of it, but rub it I must, or I shall go mad. It is that confounded Persian insect powder! My pocket handkerchief? In my coat pocket. Shall I get up and get it? I hesitate: I try the quilt, but a Japanese futon does not lend itself readily to the soothing of the irritated organ. I even rub it on the mats, but they are open to a similar objection. There is no help for it; I must get up and procure my cambric. Again my folded pillow has flattened out, and again must my pile of futon be arranged.

Then I sit upon them, and gazing with

\* "Gomen nasai," equivalent to "I humbly beg your pardon," a form of polite apology constantly used by the Japanese.

a melancholy and watering eye, and a reddened and justly exasperated nose, at my dim oil-lamp, wonder whether it would not have been as well to have stayed at home. A chilly feeling about the legs warns me to once more enwrap myself in my quilt, and doing this, I patiently, if not prayerfully, resign myself to whatever further trials a malignant fate may have in store for me.

I have not to wait long. My room is contiguous to the bath, and sudden splashings and sluicings, and little hissings and cooings, denoting intense enjoyment, tell me that someone is engaged in his or her evening ablutions. Ah! an Eve at the fountain; for being joined by a second nymph, and now by a third, great become the splutterings, and spatterings, and gurglings, to say nothing of the chattering and laughing. Evidently three of the waiting maids indulging in their evening tub after the labours of the day. Oh! woman! woman! Be your country Greenland's icy mountains—no, I forgot; they don't wash there, and only undress twice a year—or India's coral strand, or Africa's sunny fountains, or Belgravia, or Saratoga; whether sitting, crowned with odorous flowers on moonlit sands in some fair island of the southern seas, or taking out your pads and brushing your back hair in the privacy of your luxurious dressing-rooms; whenever two or three of ye congregate together, unrestrained by the presence of the harsher sex, the theme of your gossip is ever the same! It is always what he said to you or to her, and what you or she replied to him; and here in a Japanese bath it is the old, old story. Two of my nymphs are evidently quizzing the third about a certain Mr. Chokichi; and she, by no means averse to the soft impeachment, retaliates with the names of a Mr. Kin and a Mr. Yaszuzo; and then such rippling of laughter, and such splashing of water, and such thorough light-heartedness, that forgetting my sadly interrupted slumbers, I cannot find it in my heart to be churlish enough to call out and put a stop to the innocent fun. So I lie still, and presently the chattering fair ones leave the bath, and peace and quiet again prevail.

Only for a brief space. I am beginning once more to see visions and dream dreams, when I am suddenly roused into more thorough wakefulness than ever by that—to me—most dreadful of all dreadful sounds, a child's cry. Sitting up hastily

I find that it proceeds from the next room. Yes, there is no doubt of it; louder and louder grows the wail, more thrilling and exasperating the screech. Now mamma has rushed to the rescue, and begins to talk the usual soothing nonsense, which only has the effect of increasing the screams. Papa has awakened, and in a grumpy bass adds his tones to the discordance. "Kalchup, kalchup, kalchup! Akka, akka, akka! Who-o-o-p!" The miserable bantling has the whooping-cough. Covering my head with the quilt I am suffocated; uncovered I am deafened. I make every excuse for Herod, and wonder why the law enacted for the slaughter of the innocents was ever repealed. I wish I were Robinson Crusoe; I wish I were the last man; I wish— There; the paroxysm has passed, and the sound has subsided to gentle whimpers, Mamma is crooning a tuneless cradle song; papa is snoring an accompaniment. My self-willed pillow must once more be coaxed into serviceable shape, and then again I lie recumbent and despairing.

Well, I suppose that

Some must watch while some must sleep,  
Thus runs the world away;

but sleep being specially enjoined on me by the doctor, I wish I could carry out his advice. I will count up to a thousand. I do so, and am more hopelessly awake when I achieve the feat than when I commenced. I will enumerate sheep jumping over a hedge. Not a baa-lamb can I conjure up. I feel like little Bopeep, but perhaps, like her truant flock, if I let 'em alone they will make their appearance. There; there they are! One, two, three. I'm really dropping off. They are beginning to bleat. Sheep, gentle sheep, nature's sweet restorer—baa-lamb—she—Am I dreaming? That's not a sheep; that's an unmistakable puppy. Ye'p! yelp! Where the deuce is it? Outside the bath-room door, either tied up or shut in, or in some inextricable predicament or other. Confound it! I can't stand this." I scramble up and open one of my panels. Yes, I thought so; outside the bath-room door. "Oi! neesan! neesan! neesan! [fortissimo] neesan! [furioso] neesan!" If I had but a tithe of the sleeping powers of those girls. "N-e-e-e-e-san!" Ah! that last shout roused them, for a faint and sleepy "He-e-e-e!" comes back. But I've roused the house as well, as sundry slidings

\* The name by which Japanese waiting-maids are always addressed.

back of screens betoken, and various voices in tones of alarm ask if there is a fire or a robbery. The child has woke up in terror, and screams itself into a frightful fit of whooping. Amidst the din I manage to explain that something must be done to quiet the dog. In compliance with my request somebody goes out, and after about five minutes' search with a broom handle and a volley of "baka" \* epithets, manages to turn out the animal, and to hit it upon some tender part of its anatomy with a well-aimed missile, causing it to retreat under the floor of my room, where for a considerable time it sends forth a succession of the most piercing yells. After a long interval of misery, however, the house gets quieted down. More business, in stage parlance, with the pillow and bed-clothes, and again I set off in search of the apparently unattainable.

If sleep would only cover me "all over, thoughts and all, like a cloak," as Sancho Panzasa says! Not a bit of it. There goes a whistle! Another hideous destroyer of my peace. Now, why, in the name of all that's in—somnolent, is that shaven-pated, dunderheaded, sightless old dotard, the shampooer, permitted to perambulate the streets at this unearthly hour, making night hideous with his twin flutes? That horrible, nerve-distracting whistle, sounding sometimes a flat sixth and sometimes a sharp seventh; the only effect wanting to complete the devilishness of Liszt's demoniacal symphony, "L'Inferno," and one which he certainly would have added if he had visited Japan before composing it. If I had an opiate I would take it. Opiate? Happy thought! My whisky-flask, which I always carry in case of any emergency. If the present be not an emergency, I don't think one can possibly arise. I am a sober man, only one remove from Father Matthew, but under the present circumstances I believe myself fully warranted in drinking deep of the "leperous distilment." The lamp is burning very dimly, and in an evil moment, raising the shade, I undertake to remedy the defect. The wick slides back under my clumsy touch into the saucer of oil, and in an instant I am alone with darkness. I have no matches: I dare not again arouse the household, with the certainty that if I attempt it I shall wake up the baby and remadden the dog. To endeavour to find my anticipated solace is absurd. I don't

know where I put it, and if I could remember, I am utterly lost in the room. So there is nothing for it but to crawl about on the floor, caterpillar fashion, until I can lay my hands on the bed. Having succeeded in finding that, I huddle myself on it in some way or other, and then lie and think—wickedly.

Heavens! What's that? A peculiar scratching tells me that I am not alone. Pattering of little feet conveys to my horror-stricken mind the blood-curdling, goose-fleshing, hair-raising fact that there is something in the room, and that I and it are on the floor together. I am a brave man by daylight when there is no immediate and patent cause for alarm: but in a room at night, in Egyptian darkness, alone on the floor with a rat, my courage becomes even as water, and finds issue at every pore.

Ugh! Four cold paws and a "dem'd moist unpleasant body" pass o'er my face, and with a shriek of horror I bury myself under my quilts.

I have a faint recollection of my agonised cry having roused up the child, who woke up the parents, who awakened the dog, which brought out the servant girl, and then I must have become insensible for a time. I am recalled to life by a frightful rumbling, which I at first take to be an earthquake which has shaken down the house and buried me in its ruins. Cautionously I emerge from under the bed-clothes. It is broad daylight, the sun is streaming in where the outer shutters are being run back with rattle and clatter, while a merry face looks in upon my prostrate form, and a cheerful voice exclaims that "It is early! Yes, only just six o'clock, and truly it is beautiful weather. The gentleman no doubt slept well. No? Oya! oya! indeed that is sad extremely. How is it? But a cup of tea shall be forthcoming immediately."

#### IN SEPTEMBER.

In the soft September evening, beside the Southern  
sea,  
While the west wind o'er the uplands was blowing  
fresh and free;  
While the sunset's parting glory on the heaving  
waters lay,  
Gold flashing into crimson, and paling into gray.  
In the soft September evening, with the low melo-  
dious roar  
Of the ripples as they rose and fell upon the shingly  
shore,  
Blent careless laugh, and call, and song, and in  
sudden fitful swells,  
Borne on the inland breezes, the clash and chime of bells.

\* Equivalent of the French "animal."



In the soft September evening, one dreamer sate alone,  
While the white-tipped wavelets to her feet crept  
over sand and stone;  
And with ears that heard yet heeded not, fixed eyes  
that did not see,  
Felt the music and the loveliness, that made it good  
to be.

In the soft September evening, the years went rolling  
back,  
The flowers re-bloomed, the suns re-shone, crushed,  
clouded in their track;  
Hope reared her head and whispered, love re-assumed  
his reign,  
And in the golden gloaming her lost youth lived  
again.

In the soft September evening, her fancies, freed at  
last,  
Wove the fairy webs of joys attained, that haloed all  
the past;  
The tired heart beat, the pale cheek flushed, the sad  
eyes flashed and filled,  
As to the spell of long ago the dormant memories  
thrilled.

Through the soft September evening, a dusk and  
shiver crept,  
The sun sank down into the waves, the wild winds  
o'er them swept;  
As in farewell to its beauty, over dune and down  
they sighed,  
And on the sighing shingle low sobbed the ebbing  
tide.

Through the soft September evening, her hour of  
dreaming spent,  
Up through the whispering rushes, o'er the long  
grey links she went;  
For care, and cark, and conflict, and weary hours  
to be,  
Her spirit soothed and strengthened by her watch  
beside the sea.

### THE STABLE MIND.

THE author of the queer collocation of words which forms the heading of this paper was a great man in his way. He was born to high estate, for he was the brother of the Lord of Welbeck—the nobleman who among the Dukeries is known, or rather not known, as the “invisible prince.” His biography was written by no less a person than the Right Honourable Benjamin Disraeli—since Earl of Beaconsfield and Knight of the Garter. He excited unbounded admiration among his friends, but was never popular. No man destitute of a sense of humour can ever be personally popular. He may dazzle, startle, or terrify, but can never inspire affection. Thus the celebrated “Lord George” was never popular, and only uttered three things worthy of recollection. One was the historic groan over the result of a horse-race which induced Mr. Disraeli to speak of the Derby Stakes at Epsom as the “Blue Riband of the Turf”—the groan being less witty itself than the cause of wit of others;

the second was the savagely cynical observation, “All alike, on the turf and under the turf;” the third was the droll blunder of a man, whose name was indissolubly connected with things of the horse horsey, getting up in the House of Commons to remark that what the ministry wanted at its head was “a stable mind.” The House of Commons hit the blot at once, and roared with inextinguishable laughter.

What is the stable mind? What is that curious kind of intellect which by a happy blunder was fitted with an exact description? Is it what Lord Foppington would call a “natural sprout” of peculiarly constituted people; or is it acquired by practice and experience?

The stable mind is known by its habit of looking at the world physical, as well as the world social, from a point of view of its own, as if it looked at things while mounted on horseback. As many persons are aware, things actually appear in a different light to the same person when on foot and when in the saddle. Now, the peculiarity of the stable mind is that it is, as it were, always mounted—that all it sees is seen from the centauric view-point, as the lover sees everything through an amaranthine haze. A perfect exponent of the stable mind is my particular friend, Tommy Bullfinch, the son of a worthy old father, who declared the true life of a country gentleman to be passed in hunting three days a week, shooting three days, and reading Bell’s Life after church on Sunday. Tommy shoots much less than his father, and hunts six days a week during the season, occupying the rest of the year in going to race meetings and looking after a few thoroughbreds he has in training at Newmarket. What Tommy Bullfinch does on Sunday I do not pretend to know. He may pass the whole of the day of rest—after morning service, of course—in studying a mysterious sheet called the Racing Calendar, or he may be immersed in what he calls “making up his account,” for I rarely see Tommy on Sundays, and when I do he is preternaturally serious. This latter quality is one of the unfailing marks of the true stable mind. It must be serious and solid—not to say stolid. The clothing of the mind like that of the body which contains it must be severe—not to say puritanically trim. There is, however, it must be confessed, nothing puritanical in the tongue through which the mind speaks except as to a certain dry precision—covering, one feels certain, a discreet reticence.

When the stable tongue says that it does not know, one feels, as it were, a box on the ear for asking an impertinent question, and at the same time the conviction that the speaker "could, an' if he would." The higher kind of stable mind is indeed conspicuous rather for brevity and severity than for the slanginess which clothes inferior manifestations. But the attitude of the mind is the same. To the stable mind the world with all within it is composed of race-courses, hunting countries—as they are called—and certain roads. These are the great geographical features of the world as it appears to Bullfinch. Ask him about the weather in winter, and you will find that he does not care a rush about the opening of the Baltic trade, the wreck chart, or the returns of the Bureau Veritas; but will be able to form a shrewd idea of the effect of a cold spell upon the Quorn, the Pytchley, and the Holderness countries. Ask him about the continued rain, and his mind will turn to the countries full of "plough," and he will pronounce them only fit to "pull cattle to pieces." Early in the hunting season he may be found growling against the late long autumn, delicious to everybody else, because it keeps up the hedges to a state in which they are difficult for him to "negotiate," as he calls it. It is a small matter to him that the land is frozen or flooded, except in so far as the condition of the ground affects the hunting. A protracted frost reduces him to despair. Gloomily swishing the outward part of his legs with a riding-cane, and bending the said legs every now and then in the true equestrian manner—by no means to be imitated by legs legal, ecclesiastical, or commercial—Tommy will enumerate in doleful accents the number of animals he has at Melton or Harborough "eating their heads off." Having, like most persons of a stable mind, a turn for arithmetic, he will indulge in a calculation of what his hunting in a hard winter has cost him per run, and predict in mournful accents the loss he will suffer by selling his animals in spring. To him it seems that good fellows and staunch riders go when they die—not like good Americans to Paris, but to a land fashioned after the model of the "grass counties," as he affectionately calls them, with large fields for the hounds to race over, and stiff ox-fences to test the capacity of horse and man. To many of the most beautiful parts of England he entertains a fixed aversion.

Hampshire, for instance—the stronghold of the sometime celebrated Vine pack of "Squire Chute's"—he puts aside as "too much of a woodland country"—not fit for hunting at all. Wiltshire and Dorsetshire please him better, but he swears mainly by Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, and part of Warwickshire. The world to him is briefly a place for hunting the fox in, and woe betide the thoughtless creature who hints in his presence that that handsome and astute animal is not an unmitigated blessing to the country he inhabits. "Cruelty," he will say, "rubbish! If there were no fox-hunting it would soon be all over with the foxes, for a confounded set of wire-fencing farmers would soon exterminate them." He is also seriously averse to the destruction of ground game. "Rabbits," he snaps out, "of course rabbits must be protected. Rabbits must be cared for. They are the natural food of the fox."

Mr. Bullfinch's knowledge of English towns is confined to those which have racing near them, and when the old cities are referred to in his presence, he is found to be far better acquainted with the peculiarities of their race-courses than with the architectural beauties of their cathedrals. He never misses what he calls briefly "Lincoln," meaning thereby the race-meeting at that spot in early spring; but has never mounted to the crest of the hill to see whence "the devil looks o'er Lincoln." If you ask him what he thinks of Chester, his mind's eye at once turns to the Roodee, and he declares his objections to a circular course, and the vile practice of running horses "round a soup-plate." A mention of Chichester directs the stable mind to Goodwood, of York to the Knaves-mire, of Conisbrough Castle to the Town Moor of Doncaster. Seen through an equine telescope London signifies mainly Epsom and Ascot, and Newmarket is the only genuine metropolis.

The scheme of existence proposed to itself by the stable mind is surely one of the most curious phenomena of these latter days. That an average human being, young and strong, should be a hunting, and, perhaps, at times, a racing animal is, after all that can be said against such a career, in the main natural enough. It is not abnormal that many young men, endowed with health, courage, high spirits, and plenty of money, not of their own earning, should love to gallop across country, and to match their horses to run

over traditional race-courses. There is nothing strange in all this; but this is not all. The possessors of the stable mind, as a rule, care for nothing but the stable. Of their hunting life all that can be said in condemnation is that it is unduly mingled with steeple-chasing—for some occult reason not the most reputable of sports—and with whist-playing for high points; but the mysterious section of their life is that which takes them from race-course to race-course during the spring and summer months. Those who follow them on their eternal round from one Newmarket meeting round the country, till the keen air of the heath braces them again for a fresh tour, think racing hard work, and the money they make by laying and taking the odds with "noble sportsmen" very hardly earned. The professional racing-men, in fact, do for profit—an intelligible object—what those of the stable mind do for pleasure, and to make a loss. I wonder what my friend Bullfinch the younger would say if he were compelled to attend one race-meeting after another on duty—to earn his daily bread, or rather the clear turtle, the quenelles of chicken, the truffles, the quails, and the venison wherewith, not to mention plentiful libations of champagne and claret, with which he keeps the stable soul and some eleven stone of thews, sinews, and viscera together! For he is much more luxurious than the elder generation of sportmen, who rode on horse-back or walked to race-meetings. All endowed with a glimmer of the stable mind know, or ought to know, how Sir Tatton Sykes walked from Sledmere to Epsom and back to see Eager win the Derby of 1791; how that fine old English gentleman, who had several other loves beside the stable, lived on shoulder of mutton, apple-pie, Yorkshire ale, and bread and milk; and how the renowned Assheton Smith—an almost greater name to the stable mind—breakfasted every hunting morning on the same dish as his servants, a great plate of hashed mutton. Tommy Bullfinch is far more delicate in his tastes, and, to his credit be it said, avoids the carousing which of old took place, after a good run, over steaming bowls of punch duly stirred up with the fox's brush by the M. F. H., sitting on a chair made in the shape of a saddle. Tommy is of another age, and does not drink hot punch, nor anything stronger than sherry or Madeira, except, only now and then, a wee taste of orange brandy by way of "jumping powder." Tommy

lives "cleanly as a gentleman should;" but why, then, does he toil from spot to spot to the end that he may spin an awkward web of mortgages over his goodly woodlands and pleasant pastures, his clear brooks along which the pollards stand as sentinels over the trout, and those cheery hop-grounds which find him the sinews of war? It is that the stable mind reigns over him, and that the arithmetic, painfully acquired at the cost of his epidermis, is solely employed in calculating odds, making-up accounts, and constructing what he calls "amateur handicaps"—surely the oddest of occupations for a—for the present—broad-acred squire.

When the strength and prevalence of the horsey intellect is considered, it will hardly appear strange that it should have created a literature, and what it is fashionable to call a "cult," of its own, with its high priests, temples, and acolytes; its sacred books and annals; its preachers and its prophets. Whenever it shall fall to the lot of an historian to review the state of England in the nineteenth century, he will find before him a mass of literature of a not unamusing nature as representing the acts and deeds, as well as the thoughts, of the stable mind. Among the sacred volumes he will find one on which depends the whole fabric of the universe as conceived by the stable mind. This is the Stud Book—the evidence of blood, rank, and precedence among horses, as the immortal volume written by Sir Bernard Burke is among men. Among those of the stable persuasion the latter sublime compilation is not unfrequently alluded to as Stud Book Number Two, in reference to its inferior value as a test of pedigree to the genuine volume. There is no mistake, they say, about the really great volume, whereas—but this, as Mr. Carlyle has it, is a question "for philosophers" and other persons. To the true stable mind there is ineffable comfort and solace in the study of the more important volume. In it can be traced, with an exactitude in which peerages and other volumes of the kind are lamentably deficient, the precise lineage of every equine aristocrat. The great sultans of the stud have left their mark indelibly impressed upon their descendants. One great sire has bequeathed a curious flecking of white hairs; another his white face; another his grand frame but short wind. All animals of the genuine equine oligarchy are written in



this volume with their genealogies, and the stable mind loves to ponder over these in order to discover what happy combination of blood will so "nick" as to produce a perfect animal. Oft-times these calculations come to naught, after the manner of other noble alliances, and the offspring of the noblest disgraces his parentage, but at times sound calculation is verified. This occupation is perhaps the most important, and altogether the noblest and most pure, of those to which the stable mind is dedicated.

As there are historiographers for the stable mind so are there financial and arithmetical agents, whose work is duly published in the newspapers of the day; but these sheets being occupied with the affairs of that inferior animal man, and his foolish proceedings, Afghan and Zulu wars, ecclesiastical lawsuits, and the like, can hardly find sufficient room to afford the stable mind its fitting pabulum; and a vast ephemeral literature, more than compensating for the indifference of the daily newspapers, has grown up to supply the crying want. Able editors, and others less able, have been found to conduct a special school of reading adapted to the stable mind; in some cases so supplemented by curt notices of political and social events as almost to relieve the noble sportsman of any necessity for going out of his regular train of thought, and to enable him to keep the scent of the stables ever in his nostrils. It occurred to me on a Saturday to ask my news-vendor to send me all the sporting papers, and an armful was sent to me, with a bill for three shillings and fourpence—a mass of journalism quite astounding in bulk and average ability. It is true that for three shillings and fourpence—not including the celebrated Sporting Magazine—I acquired a variety of information on subjects other than the stable, although horse-flesh was the *pièce de résistance* of all but one, in which it was curiously dished up with a sauce *dramatique*, as it were, reminding the reader of that excellent, but oddly named institution, the Dramatic, Musical, and Equestrian Fund. In the journal referred to it is what Bull-finch would call "a close thing" between the horse and his rider—a fair attempt being made to do even-handed justice to the race-course and the stage. In another newspaper intended for the reading of country gentlemen, the horse occupies the first place, but exclusively equine matter is supplemented by a mass of information on subjects likely to interest, directly or

indirectly, the stable mind. That delightful friend of man, the dog, comes in for a large share of notice, for the reason, perhaps, that all the king's horses and all the king's men could not catch a fox among them without the hounds. The pedigrees of these sagacious animals are kept as carefully as those of race-horses; and the greyhound also must, to be of any value, show a stainless pedigree. The vast subject of Peerage Number Three, or the Herd Book, is also treated of for the benefit of country gentlemen, whose attention is courted and whose tastes are tickled by pleasant stories of shooting and angling, interspersed with bits of natural history, and controversies thereon often charmingly written, and full of interest to minds other than stable. There is a seductiveness about this peculiarly English newspaper almost impossible to withstand. The stable mind, having been appeased by a full report of the past week's racing and prophetic observations concerning the "events" to be decided in the week that is coming, is gently wooed to a report of dog-shows, to athletic sports, swimming, bicycling, rowing, travelling, archery, chess, agricultural implements, whist illustrated by neat diagrams, the plague of butterflies, lawn-tennis, and the art of fly-fishing. It must be a dull dog who could not find something to read in this newspaper, which has the extraordinary merit of affording an hour's amusement at least among the advertisements, when the general contents are mastered.

Turning over the stable journalism of the week, I next encountered the old original sporting newspaper—the parent of all. It is by no means so ancient as the old Sporting Magazine which preceded Baily's excellent work, but is yet entitled to reverence as the forerunner of the marvel just described. I wonder whether the name of the great and far-seeing man who originally projected a newspaper for the stable mind was really Bell, and whether he led the life described in the columns of his journal. What manner of man was Bell, and did he really live in London or the country? His title is one of the bewilderingly bold and comprehensive kind, for while his pages are filled with country life, he boldly declares the said life to be led in London. It is not many years since Bell ruled the stable, and still more the pugilistic mind with a rod of iron. The representative of Bell not unfrequently filled the post of stake-

holder, or umpire, or referee, or whatever it may be, at prize-fights, and was the only person on the ground of whom the ruffians assembled stood in awe. Only once was the respect due to Bell's representative forgotten. A more than usually blackguardly specimen of a pugilist, acting as second to a brother rough fighting in the ring, not only disputed the decision of Bell, but did there and then strike his representative. For a moment the whole "ring-side," as I hear the ruffians assembled on such occasions were collectively called—the whole ring-side stood aghast; and then public opinion asserted itself, and a thousand pairs of biceps swelled to avenge the insult. But Bell's representative said, "Let the fight go on," and it went on to the end, by which period the rash man who had struck him felt a sickening horror creeping on. The furies were already tugging at his heart-strings, and he sought everywhere for the injured Bell, who had gone quietly away wrapped in his dignity, and what he loved to call his "upper Benjamin." Next day the penitent called at the house of Bell, but too late—the fiat had gone forth—his doom was sealed. It seems—but this is only a dim tradition enshrined in the unwritten annals of Bell—that his representative on returning home after receiving the blow in question laid the matter before his colleagues, who for a long while absolutely refused to credit the astounding intelligence. It is just possible that the representative of Bell would have been consigned to a lunatic asylum for the rest of his life had not the blow left a tell-tale "mouse," as Bell designates a black eye. It was true then—too true; but what was to be done? There was, of course, no precedent, and ingenuity went to work to devise such a doom for the offender as should make generations of pugilists yet unborn to shake in their fighting-boots. At last Bell spake. The offender was henceforth dead. No mention of his name should occur even as an advertisement in the great sporting organ of the day: and it was so. The man was forgotten in a twelvemonth, and vainly haunted the bars of the sporting public-houses at which it had previously been his wont to describe himself as "ready" or "to be heard of." Men knew him not. It was of no use his wanting to fight anybody. No brother pugilist would fight a man whose participation would prevent Bell from taking the slightest notice of the combat. He tried sparring at benefits; his name was always

excluded from the list. He tried to get up a benefit for himself; the advertisement was refused. He was dead as Queen Anne. What became of him is not known. It is supposed, however, that he was at last driven to extremities, and went back to work at his calling, for the world pugilistic knew him no more.

It must not be supposed that Bell always sang in such awful tones as these; but it was nevertheless true that all which could be done to keep the prize-fighting anachronism on its legs was done by him. It was his representative who wrote the extraordinary accounts of prize-fights, which are now republished, I presume, as literary curiosities. Few things in the annals of what may perhaps be called "argotine" language are more curious than the dexterity displayed by this strange descriptive writer in welding together the already established slang of "the fancy," and suggesting newer and more picturesque expressions. The nose of a pugilist, in the vulgar slang of the ring a "conk," became in the hands of this artist a "smeller" or a "snuffer-tray," and the skin thereof the "bark" or "japan," and his mouth, instead of the vulgar "potato," became a "kissing-trap;" his teeth were "ivories." This strange language is interesting as indicating a diametrically opposite method of procedure to that adopted by the writers of sporting novels—a species of composition exceedingly popular among the silly young men of the last generation, and those terrible young women who started the fashion of walking with the guns, and otherwise interfering with the enjoyment of field sports by the male. The pugilistic reporter of Bell displayed his ingenuity by inventing more polite and picturesque expressions than those already in use: the sporting novelist introduced the stable mind into every transaction of life. If a fast young gentleman could not eat his breakfast, he was said to be "off his feed;" if on the contrary he devoured all before him, he was complimented on his vigour with "his head in the manger." A lady who walked gracefully was "a good goer," or had "fine action." To do anything with ease was to "take it in your stride;" to object to anything was to "jib;" to take to one's work was to "jump into the collar;" to shirk it was "to shy" or "to bolt." A favourite method of producing this kind of fun was to make the hero speak of himself as a horse. If he not only respected but feared matrimony

—the object of all novels, sporting or otherwise—he said that he was not “sure of himself in double harness;” if courting, he was “entered for the matrimonial stakes.” A young lady’s hair was spoken of as her “mane,” as in the famous caricature by Leech, in which a gentleman, whose legs reveal the possession of a stable mind, is discovered in a ball-room talking to a friend. In the distance is seen a very pretty young girl standing beside a tall lady with auburn ringlets, engaged in conversation with a short man wearing his hair cut short, in the fashion then called “en malcontent.” The stable-minded one speaks thus: “That is a promising young filly along with the bay-haired woman talking to the short cob-looking man.” It is difficult in the whole range of sporting literature to find anything equal to this. It was once, however, nearly approached. A horsey-looking gentleman enters a hosier’s shop and asks for a necktie. The shopman asks: “Once round, sir, or twice round and tie?” “Oh,” replies the customer, “twice round and a distance.” For a few years there was a rage for this kind of thing. In fiction the muscular young curate was balanced by the stable-minded young squire, who was odd and slangy, and, as it seemed to many, not a little vulgar, but still popular with a certain class of readers. So strong has been the flavour of the stable in England during the last twenty-five years that an eminent novelist established her fame by following up a brilliant success by a well-written story with a horsey young woman for her hero. Not long ago there was heavy betting—not in gloves—by the fair ones in the Grand Stand at Doncaster, and everybody knows by name, if not by sight, the highly-born dames who bet on commission—that is, stake heavily through the agency of their male friends. It is not therefore wonderful that otherwise irreproachable people know the meaning of the mystic phrase “bar one,” and that fashionable Angelina has a shrewd notion of how many she ought to have “against the field” for the Derby. A vulgar person succeeds in the world, and conducts himself arrogantly. The remark that “it won’t do to give a half-bred ‘un beans” is perfectly understood anywhere, from Lady Clara Vere de Vere’s at Toplofty Court to Squire Bullfinch’s at Greenhorne Grange, at Sir Oxley Foxley’s little dinners, and at Lady Fitz-Fetlock’s small and earlies. High and low appreciate a piece of purely veterinarian slang like this, for the stable mind reigns

in every stratum of life except, perhaps, the country middle-class. It is moreover somewhat tyrannical, for not to have some infusion of it is to argue oneself of the outer vulgar, of the people who are “not in it”—another bit of racing slang signifying those who, from lack of pace and quality, have no chance of figuring brilliantly before the world. I am of course now quoting the opinion of those “hupper suckles,” by which every right-thinking Englishman strives to square his existence. Very few dare appeal to any other standard. The bravest men I know I take to be two of unquestionable mark, who fear not in the best of English company to proclaim their utter contempt for field sports and disregard of the opinion of the stable mind. But one of these is of lordly stock, and is thus partly privileged to be “in it” from the cradle, and clever into the bargain—far too clever for the stable mind to break a lance with. The other is from Birmingham, which, according to the stable mind, which above all things apes an aristocratic air, explains any shortcoming in a human creature.

Far be it from me to hint that manifestations of the stable mind are always dull, or even devoid of marks of culture. It is my privilege to know an aged peer—as an Englishman, I love a lord even if he has not half-a-crown in the world—who is yet a shining star in the stabular firmament. When this excellent scholar and admirable writer takes up his pen either to describe in pleasant gossipy prose an English race-course, or to predict in ringing verse the winner of the Derby, there is a flow and verve in his style which reminds one of those classics of the stable, Nimrod and The Druid. How clean his sentences, how neat his rhymes, how he plays with the stable mind instead of allowing it to run away with him! Observe these charming lines commencing a Derby prophecy, which was verified to the letter:

Is he coopered, a stiff, and a dead ‘un?  
Is it coining to bet he don’t start?  
Yet I’ll stick to the out-and-out bred ‘un,  
And ne’er from my colours depart.

There is only one objection to this stanza, and that is the beauty of the first line, which is addressed so entirely to the stable mind that I despair of making its meaning clear, and confine myself to simple transcription, as I would in the case of the Moabite Stone, or the older arrow-headed character at Persepolis, or a Runic rhyme.

As the stable mind has its sacred books, its genealogies, its dynasties, its geography,



its life, and its language, so also has it its Mecca in the middle of Newmarket Heath, its soldiers—cavalry, of course—its high priests, its chapters, and its temples. At Mecca—otherwise Newmarket—the spot in which the great Chifney and other valiant men of might lie buried, is the chief temple of the high priesthood. Hither they make pilgrimages six times a year, and perform certain solemn functions best known to and understood by themselves. Of old these solemn chapters of the stable mind were attended with heavy sacrifices of solid and liquid food, much heavy betting, and, it was whispered, by the construction of horse-races on such a principle that only one horse could win; to the end that the uncovenanted scribes, who, not with ink-horn, but with book, pencil, and either capital or confidence, strove against the high priests, might be overcome. Whether the latter practice has survived the ravages of time it is not for the writer to decide. All that he learns through the organs of the stable mind is that the high priests are always altering, and either amending or spoiling, the laws which regulate the solemn celebrations of the “cult” of the horse, as pursued at Newmarket and elsewhere. These high priests are exceedingly jealous of their privileges, and are supposed each to keep a statue of solid gold of the winner of the last year’s Derby in his private oratory, where it is hung before a portrait of the late Admiral Rous. Several other curious things are whispered of the elect of the stable mind, which it would be profane to speak of, more especially as the Gallic imitation of the English equine hierarchy is a very pleasant institution. It is perhaps one of the most remarkable features of the stable mind that it should within a short space have spread from this country to France, and have taken a firm grip of the country gentlemen and Paris fashionables. I do not believe that the horse has yet taken a very firm grip of Adolphe and Alphonse. They may bet on horse-racing because they love gambling, but they are only gamblers first and worshippers of King Horse afterwards—by no means to be included among those truly possessed by the stable mind.

#### A DRAMATIST OF THE REVOLUTION.

WHOEVER has studied, even superficially, the history of the French Revolution, will doubtless have been struck by the number

of minor celebrities enjoying at one period or another of that momentous epoch a sudden and short-lived notoriety, and as rapidly exchanging it for complete and in many cases unmerited oblivion. Familiar as we are with the prominent figures of the time, their satellites are comparatively unknown to or neglected by us; their brief career is too often regarded in the light of a mere episode, and amid so constant a succession of ever varying events, we are seldom inclined to bestow more than a passing glance on the subordinate actors of the drama. Of these, and of the part played by them, in the majority of instances little has been recorded by contemporary chroniclers, nor, generally speaking, have they, either politically or individually, any peculiar claim to the interest of posterity; some few, however, of whose chequered existence authentic details have been handed down to us, are not altogether undeserving of remembrance, and foremost among them, as well on account of her eccentricities as of a certain prestige connected with her name, may be classed the singular personage selected as the subject of the present notice.

Olympe de Gouges, as she subsequently styled herself, was born at Montauban in 1755, and is commonly supposed to have been the natural daughter of the Marquis Lefranc de Pompignan, poet and academicien, whose pretentious and verbose productions more than once exposed him to the criticism and sarcastic ridicule of Voltaire. In one of her innumerable pamphlets, she thus confirms the popular report. “I had a right to the name and fortune of a celebrated parent; I am not, as some have pretended, the daughter of a king (Louis the Fifteenth), but of one whose crown was of laurel, as distinguished for his virtues as for his literary talent.”

Of the early years of our heroine nothing is positively known; her education appears to have been entirely neglected, for it is notorious that at no period of her life was she able to dispense with the aid of a secretary, her proficiency in writing being limited to the tracing of a very illegible signature. Her beauty, however, and a certain natural piquancy would seem to have more than atoned in the eyes of her admirers for the absence of even elementary accomplishments, for, when barely sixteen, she received and accepted an offer of marriage from a retired publican some five-and-forty years her senior, but endowed with a fair share of worldly goods; and willingly

became Madame Aubry. The bargain, as it turned out, was more advantageous to the lady than to her sexagenarian spouse, for in less than a twelvemonth after their union the worthy gentleman had rejoined his ancestors, leaving Madame Olympe (or, to speak more accurately, Marie Olympe) a young and perfectly consolable widow of "blooming, love-breathing seventeen," as Sir Anthony Absolute has it, with a capital of sixty thousand livres (a large sum in those days) at her disposal. Thus assured of a comfortable independence, and finding the neighbourhood of Montauban too narrow a field for her ambition, she lost no time in realising her fortune, and, bidding a final adieu to her birthplace, established herself in a fashionable quarter of Paris, where she soon became generally known under the assumed and not over-euphonious name of Olympe de Gouges. Young, good-looking, and comparatively rich, she speedily gathered round her a circle of worshippers, and during the next twelve or fifteen years enjoyed the privilege of notoriety to her heart's content. No one enquired whence she came, or what had been her social position previous to her arrival in the capital; she was at once accepted by the pleasure-seeking world as a congenial spirit, and, if we may trust contemporary report, indulged freely and unscrupulously in the then prevailing habits of reckless dissipation.

As she grew older, and her charms gradually began to fade, the number of her adorers decreased, and she found herself supplanted by other claimants to popularity possessing the attraction of novelty. Determined not to abdicate without a struggle, and imagining it to be easy to recover her supremacy by the prestige of literary celebrity, she engaged a secretary, and boldly set to work with the view of justifying her self-accorded title of the Sappho of the age. The theatre appearing to her the most profitable arena for the development of her genius, she at once decided on devoting to it the first fruits of her labours; and in an incredibly short space of time had dictated to her much-enduring amanuensis thirty dramas, one of which, *Zamor et Mirza*, thanks to the protection of the actor Molé, who himself undertook to read it to the managing committee, was accepted at the Comédie Française. So far all seemed satisfactory enough, but the authoress was not yet initiated into the mysteries of stage routine; weeks and months elapsed without any fulfilment of the promise made her

respecting the speedy performance of her piece. Obstacles of every kind delayed the accomplishment of her wishes, and, to crown her misfortunes, the death of Mdlle. Olivier, for whom a leading character in her drama had been expressly written, was followed by the departure of Molé himself on a provincial tour.

In this dilemma she had again recourse to her stock of manuscripts, and this time the selected specimen was *Lucinde et Cardénio*, founded on an episode in *Don Quixote*, which to her surprise and indignation was unanimously refused by the committee. Disappointed by so unexpected a result, and allowing her resentment to get the better of her discretion, she addressed to the members of the offending tribunal a letter couched in such unmeasured terms of reproach, as not only to break off all intercourse between her and the theatre, but also to occasion the definitive shelving of her previously accepted *Zamor et Mirza*. Madame de Gouges, however, was not easily rebuffed; in the hope of exciting the sympathy of her fellow-dramatists, she issued a series of circulars, imploring their interference in her behalf; and this appeal not being responded to, waited personally on Beaumarchais, who ungallantly declined to receive her. Her next step was to present to the Comédie Italienne *Le Mariage inattendu de Chérubin*, and this being in its turn rejected, she once more applied to Molé, and by dint of tears and supplications prevailed on him to exert his influence in her favour with his colleagues of the Théâtre Français; the result being a temporary reconciliation, and the immediate offer on her part of three new pieces, the non-acceptance of which threw the irascible lady into a perfect transport of fury. Fancying, rightly or wrongly, that Fleury was the principal instigator of what she termed the conspiracy against her, she caused a note to be delivered to him, the insulting tenour of which so enraged the comedian that he took an opportunity the same evening of assuring her that "were she not a woman, she should bitterly repent her impertinence." "Hearing this," says Madame de Gouges, "I longed for a sword, in order to prove to him that I could resent my wrongs like another Chevalier d'Eon!"

Her adversary, in his entertaining memoirs, has traced a curious portrait of our heroine, whom he invariably designates under the initial of Madame de G—. "She was a strange specimen of those lady

writers to whom one is instinctively tempted to offer a razor, a woman with nothing feminine about her except the name, voluntarily sacrificing the charming qualities of her sex, and bent on acquiring, no matter how, a reputation for originality. Such was her mania for effect, that she was never happy unless constantly surrounded by authors and academicians, not with the view of profiting by their conversation, for she talked incessantly and listened to nobody, but simply that her sallies and paradoxes might not be wasted on ears incapable of appreciating them. Not that she was in any way vain of her scientific or literary attainments; on the contrary, she gloried in her comparative ignorance, and prided herself on her natural capacity alone. She dressed like no one else, wearing her hair loosely enveloped in gauze, exactly as if the frothy contents of a shaving-dish had been sprinkled over it, and thereby facilitating, as she pretended, the circulation of the blood, and consequently the unchecked flow of ideas. But with all these eccentricities she had a certain quickness of repartee, and was a dangerous antagonist in wordy warfare, for she hit hard and without scruple, as none knew better than my comrade Desessarts. After the refusal of her Molière chez Ninon, to which he had mainly contributed by his objections, she waited for him at the stage-door, and accosted him as follows: 'It appears, Monsieur Desessarts, that my piece has not had the good fortune to please you.' 'No, madame,' he replied; 'your Ninon is a prude, and your Molière a sycophant; none of your personages say what they ought to say, and all of them talk a great deal too much. As for Dégipito, you have made him an old idiot.' 'A fat old idiot, you mean,' retorted the lady, with a glance at the other's corpulent figure; 'that is, if he in any way resembles the original, and I need scarcely tell you who that is!'

Finding all her efforts to propitiate the comedians unavailing, Madame de Gouges decided in 1788 on the publication of her dramatic works; and having succeeded in obtaining permission to dedicate them to a prince of the blood royal, submitted the entire collection, augmented by extracts from her correspondence with the committee of the Théâtre Français, to the judgment of her contemporaries. These three volumes, of which probably only a limited number of copies were printed, have become extremely rare, and are seldom met

with in public sales. In a passage of the preface she thus reminds the actors that her *Zamor et Mirza* is still unrepresented. "My drama, ladies and gentlemen, has waited its turn long enough: in common with the entire civilised world, I earnestly summon you to produce it!" This appeal would doubtless at any other moment have remained unattended to, but 1789 had arrived, and with it the Revolution; a few days subsequent to the taking of the Bastille the management of the Comédie, being in search of a pièce de circonstance, remembered *Zamor et Mirza*, and after altering and remodelling it as far as the time permitted, put it into rehearsal under the title of *L'Esclavage des Nègres*. Of all its author's productions this was perhaps the worst, and although carefully mounted and supported by the leading members of the company, created little or no sensation. But the triumph of Madame de Gouges was nevertheless complete; the one aim of her life had at length been gratified, and, in spite of every apparently insurmountable obstacle, she had been played at the Théâtre Français!

Notoriety, however, being as necessary to her as the air she breathed, it was not to be expected that she would neglect the opportunity of contributing her share to the political ferment of the hour. She was soon enrolled among the most ardent advocates of the great social movement, and successively addressing the monarch, the Assembly, and the masses on whatever subject came uppermost in her excitable brain. Pamphlet followed pamphlet with such rapidity that her unfortunate secretary, condemned to the herculean task of bestowing on her incoherent rhapsodies some faint resemblance to common-sense, was at his wit's end; while the walls of the capital were placarded with her advertisements, and every soul she could scrape together was absorbed by the united claims of the bill-sticker and printer. One of her favourite topics was the emancipation of women, and this congenial theme was discussed with her wonted feverish enthusiasm in *Le Prince Philosophe*, published in 1791. Towards the close of the following year she addressed a petition to the president of the Assembly, offering to assist M. de Malesherbes in the defence of Louis the Sixteenth; and her proposal being rejected, consoled herself for the disappointment by the production of a drama called *Les Vivandières*, in which she introduced General Dumouriez and other notable per-



sonages of the time. This piece, wholly without literary merit, and mainly consisting of a succession of battles and military evolutions, was represented at the Théâtre Français (then Théâtre de la République) in January, 1793, and received with mingled hilarity and disapprobation. After the fall of the curtain, one or two voices having ironically demanded the author's name, Mdlle. Candeille, coming forward to announce it, was interrupted by a gaunt\* and strangely attired female starting up from her seat in a box, and exclaiming: "Citizens, you desire to know the name of the author, behold her in me, Olympe de Gouges. If you are not pleased with the piece, you may thank the actors, for they could not possibly have played it worse!" This singular declaration being received with a storm of hisses, Mdlle. Candeille protested that she and her colleagues had done their best, and the audience, siding with her, pursued Madame de Gouges through the corridors out of the theatre, some of them even insisting that their money should be returned. Nor was this all; scarcely had she reached her home when a mob assembled before the door, and with loud cries denounced her as an accomplice of Damouriez, then an object of suspicion to the popular party. Disdaining to conceal herself, she answered the summons in person, and boldly faced her assailants, one of whom seized hold of her, tore off her head-dress, and shouted for the benefit of the bystanders: "Going for four-and-twenty sous, the head of Citizen Gouges! Once, twice, at four-and-twenty sous!" "My good friend," she replied with the utmost coolness, "allow me to bid thirty for it, and to keep it on my shoulders!" This courageous sally was greeted with a murmur of approval, the crowd gradually dispersed, and she was saved—for a time.

Notwithstanding this narrow escape, however, it was not in her nature to remain passive; in an unlucky moment she conceived the idea of directing her sarcasms against the then omnipotent dictator, and commenced her attacks by the publication of a pamphlet entitled, "Prediction respecting M. de Robespierre." No notice being taken of this preliminary attempt, she returned to the charge, and addressed to the object of her antipathy an extra-

ordinary letter, the pith of which is contained in the following extract. "It is I, Maximilian, who am the author of the prediction respecting thee, I, Olympe de Gouges, more man than woman! Thou wouldst give, sayest thou, thy life to ensure the glory and welfare of our country! Good; thou knowest the history of the young Roman who threw himself into an abyss for the salvation of the republic! Robespierre, hast thou the courage to imitate him? Let us plunge together into the Seine! Thou needest a bath to cleanse thee from the stains of crime; thy death will tranquillise the public mind, and the sacrifice of my innocent life will disarm the anger of Heaven. I am useful to my country, as thou art well aware; but thy fate will deliver it from the most terrible of scourges, and I shall perhaps never have an occasion of serving it more effectually!"

This time Robespierre did answer, by signing the warrant for her arrest. Summoned before the revolutionary tribunal, she defended herself with courage and great presence of mind, and heard without emotion the sentence of condemnation passed on her. Her last words on the scaffold are said to have been: "Fatal yearning after celebrity! J'ai voulu être quelque chose!"

### "WITH A SILVER LINING."

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

ALL night in the summer stillness came the song of a nightingale from among the roses. All night with feverish restlessness a man tossed on his couch of pain. All night in the silver moonrays a girl lay awake and uneasy, with throbbing veins still strained and aching from that terrible weight, with sleepless eyes that would not close, and a strange dull foreboding in her heart that had never chilled its glad young beats before.

"Was life really so sad?" she wondered. "Did it hold pain so great, and woe so deep, that the heart turned to bitterness, and joy to grief, and love to hate? Would the cloud shadow her own life too, since the old man had told her none could escape?"

Through all her dreams this one thought ran, haunting her, saddening her, chilling her natural joyousness, disturbing her natural gaiety, which had been hitherto the gaiety of a child knowing naught of evil, dreading naught of pain.

With the morning her father sought the

\* There exists no engraved portrait of Madame de Gouges; but it is affirmed by contemporary writers that at this period of her life she had entirely lost her good looks, and appeared to be considerably older than she really was.

stranger's side, and dressed his wound with some of the old medical skill that he had never forgotten, though he had long ceased to practise as a physician. It was then that, for the first time, the young man learnt the story of his danger and rescue, and heard with mingled wonder and admiration of the heroism to which he owed his life.

"What can I say," he murmured as the story ended, and the old man's voice trembled with emotion over the recital of his darling's bravery and deadly peril. "No words, no acts can ever repay such a debt. I wonder you do not hate me, seeing in my foolhardiness such risk to the life you love so well!"

"She is my only child—my all," said the old man tenderly. "To have lost her—well, there lives for me no word to paint the agony of that thought. And yet, I would not have had her act otherwise. In Heaven's sight are not all lives equal?"

"There would have been none to mourn me," said his companion sadly. "My existence is of small value in comparison with what hers seems to you."

"Aye, Heaven be praised, she was spared!" was the fervent ejaculation. "But you are over young to talk of being so little missed or cared for."

"Nevertheless, it is quite true. I am utterly friendless. My life has been hard, loveless, toilsome: it is of small account to anyone but myself."

"I hope you do not follow the cant of the day," rejoined the old man somewhat sternly, "and allow there is no good or desirable thing in life now, and therefore waste its fairest and freshest years in the exhaustion of folly—the lawlessness of sin!"

"No; I do not hold such views. But to exhaust the follies of life and to follow its lawlessness one must be rich enough to reckon no cost, or vicious enough to stay for no better impulse. I am certainly not the one, for I am a poor man, and live by my wits. I hope I am not the other, since amidst a life that has always been hard, and a youth that has always been lonely, I have still kept faith in Heaven, and pity for man, and reverence for woman."

"Have you a mother?"

A dark shade clouded the frank young face.

"She is dead," he said. "As for other relatives, my father has disowned me. I do not even bear or know his name. Brother or sister I never possessed. I am quite alone. I believe I am entitled to be

called a gentleman. I gain my bread by painting, or doing illustrations for periodicals. I live most of the year in London, and have come to this village for a month's rest, as my health has not been strong of late. There is my history, sir. It is all my introduction."

"And quite enough," said the old man heartily. "Your face is too frank and open to deceive, and I am quite sure your heart is honest too!"

He shook hands cordially with the guest so strangely brought beneath his roof, and then bade him come to the little sitting-room when he felt sufficiently rested.

"You will find Vera there," he said in his genial kindly tones, that were so frank in their cordiality, so trustful in their welcome. "My daughter, I mean."

"May I ask the favour of your name?" said the young man smiling. "Mine is Keith Brandon. I do not know whom I have the honour of addressing."

"My name is Ashford: it used to bear the appendix of Doctor, but I have dropped it long since."

"I am not to use it then?" questioned Keith.

"If you wish, certainly. But most of the people here know me only as "Mister," or "Maister" as they pronounce it. Now, I really must be off. You are sure you are strong enough to come downstairs?"

"Quite sure. Why, gratitude alone would give me strength, were I not all curiosity to see one who with a woman's weakness unites a man's heroism."

"You must not spoil Vera's simplicity by fine words and London manners," said the old man with sudden gravity, as he stood at the door and looked back at the handsome face and strong erect young figure in the room beyond.

"Do not be alarmed," was the gentle response. "I reverence the simplicity and guilelessness of a true woman beyond all earthly things."

"You were no true man if you did not," said Doctor Ashford gravely, and he closed the door and went downstairs to Vera with his usual calm face and tender smile.

"How is he?" the girl asked eagerly, as she came up and kissed him.

"Much better. He is coming downstairs presently. He is anxious to see you, and thank you for your bravery. Oh, my dear—my dear, I tremble even now at the thought of it. If help had not come!"

"Why trouble yourself over possibilities, father," said Vera gently. "Help did

come, and there is no need to tremble. Your child is safe here, and likely to plague you a good while longer."

The old man smiled lovingly at the bright, beautiful face.

"May Heaven send all fathers such plagues!" he said tenderly. "What happy homes there would be, my darling!"

"You will make me vain with so much praise," she said merrily. "Come along and have breakfast. I had better send some up for the invalid, I suppose?"

"Indeed, no, Miss Ashford; the invalid is here to answer for himself!"

At the sound of the voice she turned; the sunlight wavering over her delicate face, the look of startled wonder and of glad surprise still lighting her soft shy eyes. They looked at each other.

As their eyes met—as their hands touched—as their lips opened in the old trite world-worn greeting which we use to strangers as to friends, so surely something deeper awoke in each heart—something sweeter spoke in each glance! Then their hands loosed their clasp; but the feelings, startled into sudden life, never loosed their fast, sure links, riveted in that one brief moment, that one lingering look.

"So you have found a sweetheart?"

Vera was standing by the corner of a little brown shallow brook, fringed with tall bullrushes and waving willow-stems. She started as the words fell on her ear, and looked round at the speaker. The old man whom she had met in the poppy-fields some three weeks before, "the miser of the glebe," as the villagers all called him, was standing a short distance off, leaning on his stick, and scanning her with malicious eyes and a sneering smile.

The girl's face flushed slightly beneath his scrutiny.

"What do you mean?" she asked him.

"You are still happy, are you not?"

She lifted her eyes to his with a dreamy wistful regard.

"I am very happy."

"And who is the handsome stranger who is always by your side now? I heard of your folly in nearly sacrificing your life for his. Of course, woman-like, you will complete it by giving that life to him hereafter, to guard or wreck as he pleases!"

She flashed on him a look of such startled pain, such speechless anger, as made the mockery of his own eyes fade.

"You have nothing to do with my

actions," she said haughtily. "I scarcely think you mean to insult me, but your words are, to say the least of them, unwarrantable and incomprehensible."

He laughed.

"I thought nothing in the way of admiration was incomprehensible to women. I scarcely suppose your new friend has been with you so constantly and left you unaware of your own attractions. You must know that you are beautiful."

The proud eyes swept over his face in calm surprise.

"You are the first person who ever told me so."

"Is your lover so cold then—or so blind?"

"How dare you use such words to me," she said with sudden anger in her voice, and a certain shame in her pained young heart. "You have no right—"

"Save my experience and your ignorance."

She shrank away with a movement of aversion.

"You need not remind me of that. If experience turns all fair and holy things to bitterness and contempt, I pray I may never exchange my ignorance for it!"

The keen eyes of the old man sparkled with malignant mirth. He liked to rouse the gentleness and calm of this girl's spirit to something more akin to wrath and bitterness than she herself was aware of.

"Keep that ignorance then, my dear," he said ironically, as she moved away with a slight bow of farewell. "Keep it with its twin-sister—content. When you part with them your life's happiness goes too!"

She made no answer, but turned away hurt and pained, and left him by the brook-side in the evening shadows.

But as she went homewards she could not forget his words. They had stirred her heart from its rest; they had left her with memories whose innocent shame tortured her as nothing in all her bright glad life had ever done before. Hitherto her heart had leaped to the gladness of youth; the mere sense of living and enjoying the simple innocent life she had known. Now a new element had arisen in that life, and through the golden haze of pure faiths, and trustful hopes, and fairy dreams, another face looked back to hers, another future met and paused beside her own.

The old man's words had shown her this, and left her disturbed and saddened all at once. This stranger whose life she had saved, whose presence had haunted her



for these few short weeks, had grown unaccountably dear, though no word of love or glance of passion had lived in his speech or look.

She did not know—how could she—the conflict that he waged each day, each hour that found him in her presence. She could not guess how hard it was to restrain every look and every word that might betray his own secret. She did not know that being in his own sight a nameless, obscure, toiling son of fortune, he, therefore, deemed it dishonourable to awaken either interest or regard for himself in the girl's fancies, knowing that to take, or seek to take her from the safety and innocence of her sheltered life, and ask her to battle with him through the stern and sordid ordeal which his own future represented, was a thing utterly impossible to his generous impulse and his chivalrous love. Therefore he guarded himself so closely, and betrayed by no word or sign the weakness that at times she unconsciously tempted almost beyond endurance. Therefore it was that he said to himself as he wrestled with a love that every day but strengthened and increased: "I will leave her unwooed. So best!"

Perhaps some vague hope of a future when he might win her arose at times in his heart. Some vision of a fame he might touch, a fortune he might secure. Then, he told himself, he might speak. Now it looked to him unmanly to do so.

"She will never know," he thought. "She is but a child still."

But do what he might he could not forget her—he could not care for her less. With one look she had shattered the serenity of his whole previous life, and left to him a memory that was precious and painful both in one, and had given him along with its preciousness a weary self-contest that brought but little hope of peace, but little care for victory. For he loved her too well to forget, and between them lay a barrier that it would be the work of years to overthrow, the foe of many a youthful love—poverty.

He had grown accustomed to shifts and straits for himself; to go without meals; to deny himself all but bare necessities; to live from hand to mouth, toiling, working, struggling, fighting single-handed in a great city's warfare; but to ask her to share such a life, or risk such straits, with only his arm to lean on, his love to recompense, was what he had no courage to do.

He was her debtor. Could he ask her to take such recompense as this? Could he repay thus the noble heroism that had risked life in his service without a thought of consequence?

All the manhood in him rebelled against the thought. He crushed down the impotent desires that stung him to madness—the passionate longings which strove ever and always to tear aside the mask of impassiveness he wore—the regrets that no power of his own could lull to rest.

"I must leave her," he told himself. "I cannot, dare not stay here longer! With each day my strength grows less!"

Even as the words were on his lips he met her face to face.

She was coming home with the old man's taunts still fresh in her memory—with the shame his words had awakened still burning in her innocent heart.

As she saw him the colour flushed from brow to throat. Her eyes drooped. The usual welcome died on her lips unspoken.

"I am glad I have met you," he said with his usual courteous gentleness. "I was about to call at the cottage to say farewell. I leave to-morrow."

She started slightly. Had he but looked at her he would have seen the sudden pallor of the sweet face, the flash of pain in the wistful eyes. But he was looking far beyond, to where the sunrays touched the river's quiet breast with slanting bars of gold.

"It is sudden—is it not?" she said at length.

Her voice sounded cold because of its hard-won firmness, her cheek flushed back to warmth with sudden pride.

"Yes," he answered, looking at her face now, but unable to meet the eyes she steadfastly averted. "It is sudden. I am grieved to go. I have been so happy here. I shall never forget this place, or you!"

A few moments later she stood there alone, her eyes on a retreating figure, her hands clasped tight on her fast-throbbing heart.

With all her pain a thrill of gladness mingled.

"The cloud has a silver lining," she said softly. "He said he would return."

And with the music of those words in her memory, she passed across the yellow corn-fields and took the pathway home.

"I am sorry young Brandon has gone!" said the old doctor that evening as, lean-

ing on Vera's arm, he paced up and down the little garden. "I shall miss him very much."

Vera was silent.

"I wish I could have learnt more of his history," resumed her father. "He goes by his mother's name. She never would tell him his father's. She had been cruelly wronged, and driven from his roof with her infant son, and only the charity of strangers stood between her and starvation. From what Keith says she must have been a noble woman."

"And she is dead now?"

"Yes, my child—dead—with her honour tarnished by a cruel lie, and her son's life darkened by an unmerited shame. It is very sad—very sad."

"How clever he is! He has such great gifts!" sighed the girl with unconscious pathos.

"Yes; he is both gifted and noble. But he is so poor, and in the world genius always suffers in the grasp of poverty—it is a mortal foe. The man who can dower genius with success lives in a palace—the man who owns it in a hovel. The one who buys is great, the one who creates may want bread, or be thankful for a beggar's crust. Yes, it is strange, but true."

"There is not much happiness then in the world?" questioned the girl, to whom all knowledge of its miseries and sins and woes were alike unknown.

"My dear, there is happiness everywhere for those who seek it aright; but it is a word of many meanings, and the true meaning is only—there!"

He pointed up to the radiant heavens as they stretched in cloudless calm above his head. The girl's face grew awed and pale as she looked at him, then suddenly she drew his arms around her and laid her head upon his breast.

"You have made all my life's happiness for me," she said. "How good you are—how good!"

"My love, none are that!" he said tenderly. "Being mortals, and being weak through sin within and beset by sin without, how could it be otherwise?"

"Do you know anything of the old man at the glebe?" asked Vera presently. "He speaks to me sometimes, but he is very hard and very bitter."

"I only know him by what the people here say," answered her father. "That he is miserly and eccentric, and lives quite alone, save for the old witch-like woman who attends to his simple wants. I have never exchanged words with him since I lived here."

"I feel so sorry for him," continued the girl pityingly. "And he talks so strangely to me always. He seems to resent the mere fact of my being glad and light-hearted as an injury to himself. He warned me one day that every life had its shadow—its days of woe, and darkness, and grief—that mine would come too. If they do— Papa, papa! what is it?"

The awful agonised cry that left her lips was echoed by a groan of mortal agony. The old man's feeble form seemed to slip from her childish arms, and he lay on the grass at her feet like a felled log, in the grasp of that terrible foe—paralysis.

The girl's shrieks quickly brought the old woman-servant from the house, but their united strength was unequal to the task of carrying that helpless burden. Aid had to be procured from the village, and medical assistance summoned; but the old doctor's great age rendered science of no avail. He lived for a week unconscious, then died in his child's arms.

Over her life the cloud and darkness of a great sorrow had indeed fallen.

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